

All I ever wanted to be was a mother. Since I was a child, it was my only real dream, my one true vision for my future. In 2013, that dream became a reality, but one that involved some nightmares I never imagined. I'd had an easy pregnancy and an unremarkable delivery, but after I had my beautiful baby girl, something was immediately wrong. I didn't have an appetite and couldn't sleep well, despite being exhausted. I had no interest in...anything really. I wasn't happy to see my friends who visited and brought meals. I didn't watch TV or read books or enjoy conversations. I wasn't experiencing any sense of love or connection with my newborn daughter. All I could think was that I had somehow ruined my life by fulfilling what I had thought was my dream. I felt like a huge burden to my husband and family, who had this child to care for and now me as well. I could only stare into space as I worried and regretted and cried and wished for an out - on repeat. Thankfully I had a sister, a spouse, and friends who recognized that this went beyond the "normal baby blues." But even as someone who is well-versed in mental health and open about her past experiences with anxiety and depression, it was really hard to accept that I was dealing with something medical and not just failing in my role as a mother. I'm grateful that I was able to find help relatively quickly - but even that required an "in" with a psychiatrist who was a colleague of a friend and made space in their busy schedule to see me. Thankfully after medication and therapy, I improved and had a second postpartum experience that was vastly different than the first. I had no idea such joy was possible! I am so grateful for getting the help I needed and can only hope and pray that future parents going through this might feel seen and supported in their struggle. It so easily could have gone differently for me, and I shudder to think how that may have ended. Robust, well-rounded, and accessible postpartum care should be a priority for all of us. Let's make Maryland the best place to build a family.

Thank you!

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